

reference to the Theory of Natural Selection.' It was illustrated with lantern slides. Remarks followed by the Chair and by Dr. Allen.

At the conclusion of this paper the Union adjourned to meet in Washington, D. C., November 11, 1895.

The attendance at this Congress, together with the large number of new members elected, not exceeded by any year, was particularly gratifying. It shows the continued interest in ornithology in this country.

JNO. H. SAGE,  
Secretary.

Portland, Conn., Nov. 30, 1894.

---

## RECENT LITERATURE.

Elliot's Monograph of the Pittidæ. — Part IV of this superb monograph bears date September, 1894. The eleven plates illustrate the following species: *Eucichla boschi*, *Pitta granatina* (on the plate "*Pitta granatina-malaccensis*" by typographical error), *P. granatina borneensis*, *P. meffoana*, *P. ceruleitorques*, *P. atricapilla*, *P. cyanea* (two plates, giving old and young), *P. brachyura*, *P. baudi* and *P. erythrogastra*. So little appears to be known of these birds in life that generally (*P. cyanea* and *P. brachyura* form exceptions) the text is limited to descriptions of the plumage and the discussion of points of nomenclature in cases where names have been misapplied. An interesting case of this sort is furnished by the *Pitta atricapilla* of Quoy and Gaimard, who described the bird in 1830 and figured it in 1833. Later Lesson claimed that the name was preoccupied, having been previously given by Cuvier to another species. The name, however, so far as Mr. Elliot can determine, was never published by Cuvier and was doubtless merely a MS. museum name. Quoy and Gaimard's bird was later renamed *novæ-guinæ*, under which name it has since been universally known. In restoring the name *atricapilla* to this species Mr. Elliot acts strictly in accordance with the rule of priority, and makes a defense of the stand he takes which is well worth quoting, since this is but one of a class of cases constantly arising to vex the systematist. He says: "The law of priority is very clear in regard to the treatment of such cases, but some naturalists object to have it enforced on the ground of expediency, and because it would be

apt to create confusion. Doubtless such would be the temporary result in this and all similar instances when errors are corrected which have been continued by writers who have simply followed each other without making independent investigations; but the confusion is originally caused by those who commit errors, not by him who corrects them. . . . It may be inconvenient for those who have become familiar with any special group to have their ideas of its nomenclature disturbed, by showing that errors have been committed and then knowingly continued; but that would be a most indefensible reason to advance why these should not be corrected. . . . Conservatism is an excellent principle when it serves as a bulwark against the commission of abuses, but is a most baleful principle when it is exerted against the correction of errors." Part V, not yet published, will conclude the work. — J. A. A.

**Two Popular Bird Books.**—That there has recently sprung up a great popular interest in outdoor studies of nature is abundantly evidenced by the frequent appearance of non-technical works, particularly of works relating to birds. It is furthermore a subject of congratulation that such works show a steady improvement, not only in literary execution, but in the knowledge of the subject displayed on the part of the writers of such books. Also that the demand for them renders it feasible for publishers not only to bring them out, but to give to them an attractive setting as regards typography and illustration. Mr. Keyser's 'In Bird Land,' and Mr. Parkhurst's 'The Birds' Calendar' are recent ventures in the line of popular bird books.

Mr. Keyser's book<sup>1</sup> relates especially to the birds found about Springfield, Ohio. It consists of eighteen chapters, originally published in various periodicals during the last two or three years. It has a more distinctly literary flavor than Mr. Keyser's former collection of papers,<sup>2</sup> and abounds in poetic quotations, chiefly from the writings of Emerson and Lowell. The following transcript of the titles indicates the general style of treatment: 'Wayside Rambles'; 'Bird Curios'; 'Winter Frolics'; 'February Outings'; 'Arrival of the Birds'; 'Winged Voyagers'; 'Plumage of Young Birds'; 'Nest-Hunting'; 'Midsummer Melodies'; 'Where Birds Roost'; 'The Wood-Pewee'; 'A Pair of Night-Hawks'; 'A Birds' Gala-Day'; 'Various Phases of Bird Life'; 'A Bird Anthology from Lowell,' etc. The writer is an earnest and true bird lover, who wanders in all weathers and at all seasons in search of bird friends. He tells pleasantly what he sees, often with realistic detail, and shows himself to be not only

---

<sup>1</sup> In Bird Land | By | Leander S. Keyser | . . . [ = 9 lines of poetic quotations and monogram ] | Chicago | A. C. McClurg and Company | 1894. 12mo., pp. 269.

<sup>2</sup> Bird-dom. 12mo., 1891. See Auk, IX, p. 63.